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The adaptive edge: introducing adaptive skills techniques to Army Special Forces

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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

THE ADAPTIVE EDGE: INTRODUCING ADAPTIVE SKILLS TECHNIQUES TO ARMY SPECIAL FORCES

by

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December 2010

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For USSOCOM to maintain its upper hand in producing "elite" Soldiers, a better understanding of current adaptive skills training in the United States Army and their current implementation in United States Army Special Forces Officer training program is needed. Given the current operational tempo faced by the Special Forces soldier, having the ability to adapt to the situation at hand is paramount. History has proven that a soldier's ability to adapt, remain effective in all environments and perform optimally under all levels of stress is essential for military operations: current training in adaptive skills for military applications could be improved for all U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers. This thesis draws on current adaptive skills techniques taught at the United States Military Academy, West Point as well as adaptive skills techniques utilized in sports psychology.

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THE ADAPTIVE EDGE: INTRODUCING ADAPTIVE SKILLS TECHNIQUES TO ARMY SPECIAL FORCES

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ABSTRACT

For USSOCOM to maintain its upper hand in producing "elite" Soldiers, a better understanding of current adaptive skills training in the United States Army and their current implementation in United States Army Special Forces Officer training program is needed. Given the current operational tempo faced by the Special Forces soldier, having the ability to adapt to the situation at hand is paramount. History has proven that a soldier's ability to adapt, remain effective in all environments and perform optimally under all levels of stress is essential for military operations: current training in adaptive skills for military applications could be improved for all U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers. This thesis draws on current adaptive skills techniques taught at the United States Military Academy, West Point, as well as adaptive skills techniques utilized in sports psychology.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACEP	Army Center for Enhanced Performance
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
AS	Adaptive Skills
CAS	Close Air Support
CEP	Center for Enhanced Performance
GPF	General Purpose Forces
JCET	Joint Combined Exercise and Training
JFKSWCS	John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
RCIED	Remote Controlled Improvised Explosive Device
SF	Special Forces
SFODA	Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha
SFODB	Special Forces Operational Detachment Bravo
SFQC	Special Forces Qualification Course
SITREP	Situation Report
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SWC	Special Warfare Center
TIC	Troops In Contact
TTP	Techniques, Tactics, and Procedures
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USASFC	United States Army Special Forces Command
USMA	United States Military Academy
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW	Unconventional Warfare

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I. INTRODUCTION

> Adaptive thinking is consisting of competencies such as negotiation and consensus building skills, the ability to communicate effectively, analyze ambiguous situations, be self-aware, think innovatively, and critically use effective problem solving skills. Each of these competencies is an essential element of leader development training for the U.S. Army Special Forces.
>
> —*Special Warfare Study*

A. WHAT ARE ADAPTIVE SKILLS?

Adaptive Skills (AS) are *techniques* designed for use by Army Special Forces Operators to enhance their ability to think adaptively and perform in an adaptive manner, both of which are necessary to achieve Special Forces mission success. AS will equip a Special Forces soldier candidate with a variety of ways to think through ambiguous situations during training or in a combat environment. With AS skills developed through the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) graduate, Special Forces Operators should be able to better develop policies and inter-state relationships that promote U.S. interests, in accord with the needs of client communities and host nations.

This thesis approaches adaptive capabilities in three sequential steps: adaptive skills/techniques, adaptive thinking, and adaptive performance. In order to perform adaptively, one must be able to think adaptively. In order to think adaptively one must have the necessary skills/techniques first. Currently, adaptive research primarily focuses on adaptive performance and recognizes the fact that adaptive thinking is a critical step in achieving performance; however, little to no study has been done on the adaptive skills techniques needed to assist a SOF Soldier in achieving the endstate, which is adaptive performance.

Today's U.S. Army Special Forces Soldier is tasked to accomplish a wide range of missions, from training a Host Nation (HN) military or working with a HN Country Team in a diplomatic setting, to engaging combatants on today's battlefields in Iraq and

Afghanistan. The United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) is tasked with training the best the Army has to offer to become part of the U.S. military's premier Unconventional Warfare (UW) force. With the recent addition of a battalion to each of the operational Special Forces Groups, the demand for Special Forces soldiers is higher than ever before. Special Forces Soldiers hold the Special Operations Forces (SOF) Truths near and dear to their hearts. The SOF Truths are: Humans are more important than hardware, quality is better than quantity, Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced, and competent Special Operations Forces cannot be created after emergencies occur.[1]

The Special Operations Forces Truth, that Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced, is being increasingly challenged by the fact that the Special Warfare Center still must continue to produce at maximum capacity to meet the demands placed on the current force. While the standards for qualification have remained the same, the pool of candidates has been increased to meet these needs. The demand for candidates has extended past the regular Army, all the way to the recruiting stations. Civilians recruited straight "off the street," usually with little to no military experience, are entering the SFQC to become Special Forces soldiers within two to three years (depending on Military Occupational Skills Training). This trend, of recruiting candidates off of the street, has resulted in a much younger and more inexperienced force, yet one is expected to accomplish the wide variety of tasks that the U.S. Army Special Forces have executed in the past. Prior to 9/11, new SF team members were afforded the opportunity to mature and gain experience on a detachment through trial and error. In the past, there was typically a cadre of senior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) that were capable of mentoring young, junior NCOs to produce the more experienced SOF Operator. Due to the operational tempo of all Special Forces Groups post 9/11, graduates straight out of the SFQC are now expected to arrive to a SF Group prepared and ready for combat.

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[1] "Army Special Operations Forces Truths," USASOC homepage, http://www.soc.mil/sofinfotruths.html (accessed April 15, 2010).

Due to the increasing demand for Army Special Forces to support Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), it is critical that all operators arrive on Operational Detachments Alpha (ODA) with as many critical skills as possible. Granted, there is a formal program and metric for evaluating all Army Special Forces candidates on their physical abilities while they are attending the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). However, only Army Special Forces Officers receive any training in mental enhancement skills. Also, as of this writing, the Officer-Adaptive Leader and Thinking (O-ATL) course is only three-and-a-half days long. It is conducted in its entirety in a classroom setting only, and does not teach skills or techniques about how to *perform* adaptively. Therefore, one argument this thesis will make is that all Special Forces soldiers be exposed to AS and that AS training not be confined to just a short block of classroom only instruction.

The complex environments in which Special Forces Operators find themselves require them to be not only physically fit, but also mentally sharp. AS training is ideal for augmenting other SF Skills. For example, a Special Forces Operator is often required to make rational, strategic decisions with very little guidance. The impacts of his decisions can affect United States relations with allied nations. It is therefore imperative that a Special Forces Operator have the skills to "think on his feet," while maintaining his commander's intent. At times, he may be required to quickly analyze a situation, think through possible second- and third-order effects, and make a decision under stressful conditions. This decision will certainly impact his entire ODA, but also have ramifications at the highest levels.

This thesis utilizes the *nine dimensions of adaptive performance*, described by Susan White, Rose Mueller-Hanson, David Dorsey, and Elaine Pulakos.[2] The nine dimensions of adaptive performance offer various ways for adaptive performance to assist with the five core SF missions.

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[2] Susan S. White, Rose A. Mueller-Hanson, David W. Dorsey, and Elaine D. Pulakos, "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," *U.S. Army Research Institute, Research Report 1831* (DTIC No. ADA432443), (2005).

According to *FM 31-20*:

> SF plans, conducts, and supports SO in all operational environments and across the operational continuum. The US Army organizes, trains, equips, and provides SF to perform five primary missions– UW, FID, DA, SR, and CT. (For SF, CT is a primary mission only for designated and specially organized, trained, and equipped SF units.) Mission priorities vary from theater to theater. SF missions are dynamic because they are directly affected by politico-military considerations. A change in national security policy or strategy may radically alter the nature of an SF mission.[3]

Currently, Army Special Forces lacks a formalized program to provide all Special Forces Operators with AS. In contrast, various military installations such as the United States Military Academy and Fort Bragg, North Carolina, have a "center" that teaches adaptive skills to cadets and soldiers. What this thesis proposes is that an AS program be incorporated into the SFQC. Our contention is this would not only increase the overall capabilities of Army Special Forces Operators, but would make graduates of the Q Course more complete combat multipliers upon arrival to Group.

B.   DRAWING FROM THE LITERATURE

This thesis builds on previous work on adaptability in the workplace conducted by J.P. Campbell, R.A. McClay, S.H. Oppler, and C.E. Sagger as well as the Adaptive Performance dimensions as defined by Pulakos et al. in *Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance*. This thesis will also build on the current Adaptive Performance training program utilized by the SFQC 18A program and developed as a result of a U.S. Army Research Institute study conducted by White et al., entitled *Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers*.

Quite a bit of work has been done on adaptability in today's workplace. As the world continues to become more technologically advanced and globalized, the vast majority of workplaces can be considered somewhat dynamic and are in need of adaptive

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[3] Army Field Manual 31–20, *Doctrine for Special Forces Operations,* 3–1.

workers.[4] While research on adaptability in the workplace has grown, adaptability itself has been hard to define and measure.[5] Initial studies by Campbell focused on the utility of performance measures to increase performance in the workplace.[6] According to Campbell, someone's job performance can be synonymous with his/her behavior, which is quantifiable according to levels of output and proficiency in the workplace.[7] Campbell's *A Theory of Performance* indentifies eight major performance components that can be identified in every job. These are:

- Job task proficiency

- Non-subject task proficiency

- Written and oral communication

- Demonstrating effort

- Maintaining personal discipline

- Maintaining peer and team performance

- Supervisor/leadership

- Management/administration.[8]

While other researchers have added to this field of study, Campbell's performance components have remained a basis for the study of performance in the workplace.

Utilizing Campbell's research on adaptability in the workplace as a foundation, Pulakos et al. explained how adaptability applies to job performance. They consequently developed a taxonomy of adaptive performance that defined eight dimensions utilized

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[4] Elanie D. Pulakos, Sharon Arad, Michelle A. Donovan, and Kevin E. Plamandon, "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 85, no 4 (2000): 612.

[5] Elaine D. Pulakos et al., "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Perfomance," 613.

[6] J.P. Campbell, R.A. McCloy, S.H. Oppler, and C.E. Sagger, "A theory of performance," in *Personnel selection in organization* eds. Neal Schmitt and Walter C. Borman (San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993): 35–70.

[7] J.P. Campbell et al., "A theory of performance," 35–70.

[8] Elaine D. Pulakos et al., "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Perfomance," 617.

across 24 different jobs.[9] They list these eight adaptive performance components in something they call the Job Adaptability Inventory (JAI). The JAI includes the following:

- Handling emergencies or crisis situations

- Handling work stress

- Solving problems creatively

- Dealing effectively with unpredictable or changing work situations

- Learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures

- Demonstrating interpersonal adaptability

- Demonstrating physically oriented adaptability.

As a framework, the JAI helps better define the otherwise ambiguous terms associated with adaptability. According to Pulakos et al, each specific job will require a different amount of emphasis on each dimension.[10] Not all jobs will require the same amount of attention to each performance dimension and any model created to measure adaptive performance must be tailored to each application. Pulakos et al. also identify three categories—cognitive, non-cognitive, and physical—that help further refine the eight performance dimensions.

C.   SF AND ADAPTIVE LEARNING

In 2005, the Army Research Institute (ARI), in collaboration with the USAJFKSWCS, assessed attributes associated with adaptive performance training during Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS), and the SFQC The ARI study found that "SFAS provides a high level of assessment of the physical-fitness attributes, a moderate level of assessment of most of the cognitive and personality attributes, and a low level of assessment of the communication attributes and the cultural adaptability

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[9] Elaine D. Pulakos et al., "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Perfomance," 614–615.

[10] Elaine D. Pulakos et al., "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Perfomance," 616.

attributes."[11] The study also showed that many of the attributes are required for the first two phases of training, Small Unit Tactics (SUT) and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Training; however, all of the attributes are required for the culminating field training exercise (FTX) of Robin Sage.[12] Information gathered from Special Forces soldiers in the field reported that recent SFQC graduates were rated least proficient in the attributes of language, maturity, adaptability, autonomy, and judgment / planning. In regards to attributes within the force, the report showed that self-discipline, adaptability, and judgment / planning were all attributes that where considered deficient. In both cases, whether veterans within the force or recent graduates from the SFQC, deficiencies of maturity, adaptability, and judgment / planning were identified.[13] The report concludes with a strong recommendation to SFAS and the SFQC to improve assessment and training in the attributes of adaptability, autonomy, and communication.

Based on the ARI's recommendation, SWCS identified the need to enhance training in the subject of adaptability in the SFQC. As White et al. observed, "Adaptive proficiency is crucial for operating in the dynamic SF environments, and recent increases in mission tempo require that officers be proficient and operationally prepared immediately upon entering SF."[14] With the identification of an adaptive performance deficiency in the SFQC, a course was created for the 18A Special Forces Officer. White et al. utilized the previous research conducted by Pulakos et al., and concluded that all eight dimensions of adaptive performance were applicable to the job of being a U.S. Army Special Forces Officer. However, according to the study not only does the Special Forces Officer need to be individually adaptable, but also he needs to possess the ability to lead an adaptable team.[15] Incorporating the previous eight dimensions of adaptive

[11] Michelle M. Zazanis, Robert N. Kilcullen, Michael G. Sanders, and Doe Ann Litton, "The SF pipeline review: Voices from the field," *Special Warfare* 13, no 4 (Fall 2000): 6.

[12] Michelle M. Zazanis et al., "*The SF pipeline review: Voices from the field*," 6.

[13] Michelle M. Zazaniz et al., "*The SF pipeline review: Voices from the field*," 12.

[14] Susan S. White et al., "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," vii.

[15] Susan S. White et al., "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," 3.

performance identified by Pulakos et al., the study concluded by adding the ninth component, *Leading an Adaptable Team,* to build an adaptive performance training program suitable for the Special Forces Officer.

Today, the O-ATL is a three-and-a-half day classroom based training program, which introduces the prospective SF officer to adaptability in the Special Forces environment. The O-ATL draws from previous research in the field of adaptive performance, in conjunction with field research from current and past SF soldiers and personnel from the ARI and the Directorate of Training and Doctrine (DOTD) at SWCS. The course focuses on three key areas of adaptability; mental adaptability, interpersonal adaptability, and leading an adaptable team.[16] The O-ATL was introduced as a pilot course initially in April of 2003 and became fully integrated into the Officer's Special Forces training in January of 2004.

D.   CHAPTER REVIEW

This thesis recommends how the current O-ATL Course can be improved and expanded. Chapter I defines AS and demonstrates its importance to Special Forces soldiers. Chapter I also reviews the dimensions of adaptive performance and examines the current O-ATL Course offered to Special Forces Officer students. Chapter II defines the dimensions of adaptive performance developed by Pulakos et al., along with the ninth dimension area added by the Army Research institute and White et al. to the O-ATL Course. Chapter III lays out the adaptive skills techniques utilized by the United States Military Academy's Center for Enhanced Performance (ACEP), as well as some techniques described in sports psychology. Chapter IV offers a fictionalized account designed to illustrate how AS can assist with mission accomplishment. Chapter V provides a conclusion and our recommendations for further expansion of these techniques via Field Training Exercises (FTXs), more creative ways of teaching these techniques throughout the Q Course and the introduction of resource and training centers at the operational Special Forces Group level.

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[16] Susan S. White et al., "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," 2.

II. THE NINE DIMENSIONS OF ADAPTIVE PERFORMANCE

A. BACKGROUND

The dimensions of adaptive performance need to be clearly understood, outlined, and defined in order to identify and apply the proper AS needed to enhance performance by SF Soldiers. Pulakos et al. and White et al. have identified and defined all the relevant dimensions of adaptive performance; however, their adaptive performance dimensions describe the endstate needed to overcome unique situations that a SF Soldier may encounter, not how to achieve it. White et al. do an outstanding job of identifying the "what" of adaptive performance; what is lacking is the "how," or the skills and techniques needed to be able to think adaptively and then perform adaptively. This thesis will identify the "how" or the adaptive skills/techniques needed to achieve adaptive performance.

B. MENTAL ADAPTABILITY

In this section, the term Mental Adaptability and the applicable dimensions of adaptive performance will be addressed as they apply to the mission of the U.S. Army Special Forces. According to White et al., the term Mental Adaptability can be defined as the following:

> Adjusting one's thinking in new situations to overcome obstacles or improve effectiveness. It includes things like handling emergency or crisis situations, handling stress, learning new things, and creative problem solving.[17]

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[17] White et al., "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," 3.

In this thesis, we consider Mental Adaptability to consist of the three following dimensions:

- Handling Emergencies or Crisis Situations

- Handling Work Stress

- Solving Problems Creatively.

Special Forces Soldiers are tasked to perform their missions in a variety of environments usually considered somewhat uncertain or unpredictable. The ability of the Special Forces Soldier to remain mentally adaptable is thus a necessity. Pulakos et al. define *Handling Emergencies or Crisis Situations* as the following:

> Reacting with appropriate and proper urgency in life threatening, dangerous, or emergency situations; quickly analyzing options for dealing with danger or crises and their implications; making split-second decisions based on clear and focused thinking; maintaining emotional control and objectivity while keeping focused on the situation at hand; stepping up to take action and handle danger or emergencies as necessary and appropriate.[18]

The Special Forces Soldier is routinely placed in environments that require him to deal with emergencies and crisis situations effectively. While having the ability to identify clear options, make sound decisions quickly, and maintain control emotionally are attributes similarly desired in the civilian workplace; the stakes are frequently higher in military settings. Routinely, soldiers are faced with situations where the effects of their decisions are measured in life or death outcomes.

The second dimension of *Mental Adaptability* is the ability to handle work stress. Pulakos et al. define the sub-category of *Handling Work Stress* as:

> Remaining composed and cool when faced with difficult circumstances or a highly demanding workload or schedule; not overreacting to unexpected news or situations; managing frustration well by directing effort to

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[18] Pulakos et al., "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance," 617.

constructive solutions rather than blaming others; demonstrating resilience and the highest levels of professionalism in stressful circumstances;[19]

When faced with a work environment full of unpredictable situations, the ability to manage stress effectively will directly result in positive or negative outcomes for Special Forces. Maintaining emotional control in uncontrolled situations instills confidence in other operators, in HN, and in General Purpose Forces on the battlefield.

The last dimension of adaptive performance categorized under Mental Adaptability is the ability to solve problems creatively. Pulakos et al. define *Solving Problems Creatively* as the following:

> Employing unique types of analyses and generating new, innovative ideas in complex areas; turning problems upside-down and inside-out to find fresh, new approaches; integrating seemingly unrelated information and developing creative solutions; entertaining wide-ranging possibilities others may miss, thinking outside the given parameters to see if there's a more effective approach; developing innovative methods of obtaining or using resources when insufficient resources are available to do the job.[20]

SF Soldiers routinely face situations in which the solution is not black and white. These situations demand solutions specifically tailored to address each and every problem encountered. The "book solution" achieved during training may not be applicable or it could prove detrimental. SF Soldiers must become masters at identifying all possible solutions even if they are not consistent with current doctrine.

C.   PHYSICAL ADAPTABILITY

> Adjusting to tough environmental states such as heat, cold, etc., pushing oneself physically to complete strenuous or demanding tasks, and adjusting weight/muscular strength or becoming proficient in performing physical tasks as necessary for the job.[21]

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[19] Pulakos et al., "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance," 617.

[20] Pulakos et al., "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance," 617.

[21] Susan S. White et al., "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," 3.

The above definition directly correlates with what the typical Special Forces mission requires for success. Not only does the SF Soldier need to be physically fit to accomplish the five core SF missions as described by White et al., but he must also be able to accomplish these missions successfully, quickly, and be able to adapt to environmental conditions that can affect the mission. Therefore, it is imperative that all SF Soldiers be equipped with physical AS.

Under the area of physical adaptability, two dimensions that need to be analyzed in order to develop the proper Special Adaptive Skills to apply. These are: (1) Learning work tasks, technologies, and procedures and (2) Demonstrating physically oriented adaptability.[22] Pulakos et al. defines learning work tasks, technologies and procedures as:

> demonstrating enthusiasm for learning new approaches for conducting work; doing whatever is necessary to keep knowledge and skills current in a rapidly changing environment; quickly and proficiently learning new tasks and/or methods, inquiring about and obtaining training for unfamiliar tasks/methods, adjusting to new work processes and procedures; anticipating changes in work demands and then searching for and participating in assignments or training that will prepare oneself for these changes; taking action to improve work performance deficiencies.[23]

This dimension of the physical is one significant factor that sets SF Soldiers apart from General Purpose (GP) forces and other armies around the world. Prior to 9/11, SF was fortunate enough to have the time necessary to train their SFODAs and to implement new techniques, tactics, and procedures (TTPs) vis-à-vis the Joint Combined Exchange and Training (JCET) program and other short duration real world missions. SF Soldiers were able to learn to adapt to their situational environment, apply common sense, and execute missions under extreme physical conditions. According to Fred Pushies' book,

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[22] Susan S. White et al., "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," 2.

[23] Pulakos et al., "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance," 612.

U.S. Army Special Forces, "Special Forces Soldiers are men who step away from conventional methods and conventional thinking to undertake tasks that many experts would deem impossible."[24]

However, post 9/11 the OPTEMPO has increased and the indoctrination period is much shorter, if there was one, at all. According to Pushies, "The United States relies on its technological prowess to stay ahead of potential adversaries—and Special Forces will leverage that technology."[25] This makes learning *work tasks, technologies, and procedures* more important than ever to alleviate some of the physical stresses.

Equally important is demonstrating Physically Oriented Adaptability, which Pulakos et al. define as:

> Adjusting to tough environmental states such as extreme heat, humidity, cold, etc; frequently pushing self physically to complete strenuous or demanding tasks; adjusting weight/muscular strength or becoming proficient in performing physical tasks as necessary for the job.[26]

D.   INTERPERSONAL ADAPTABILITY

> Adjusting what one says and does to make interactions with other people run more smoothly and effectively. This includes trying to understand the needs and motives of other people, especially those in other cultures.[27]

Interpersonal Adaptability is an essential trait for SF Soldiers as they conduct their operations by, with, and through indigenous forces. A high degree of Interpersonal Adaptability is not only necessary when working with indigenous forces, but also when working with the Soldiers on an SFODA and within the Special Forces Company (SFODB). American soldiers come from different regions in the United States with different customs and courtesies. Additionally, foreign soldiers often do not share the same customs and values as Soldiers in the United States Army.

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[24] Fred J. Pushies, "*U.S. Army Special Forces*," MBI Publishing Company, MN 2001, 6.

[25] Fred J. Pushies, *U.S. Army Special Forces*, MBI Publishing Company, MN 2001, 7.

[26] Pulakos et al., "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance," 617.

[27] Susan S. White et al., "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," 3.

Interpersonal Adaptability can be divided into three dimensions: (1) *Dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations*; (2) *Demonstrating Interpersonal Adaptability* and (3) *Demonstrating Cultural Adaptability*.

Pulakos et al. define *dealing with Uncertain and Unpredictable Work Situations* as:

> Taking effective action when necessary without having to know the overall picture or having all the facts in hand; Readily and easily changing gears in response to unexpected events and circumstances; Effectively adjusting plans, actions, or priorities to deal with changing situations; imposing structure for self and others that provide as much focus as possible in dynamic situations; not needing things to be black and white; refusing to be paralyzed by uncertainty or ambiguity.[28]

The role of the Special Forces Soldier constantly places him in uncertain and unpredictable work situations, be these the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, the Embassy in Bogota, a barracks in Niger, or a training exercise in Pakistan or Yemen. Situations can go from docile and pleasant one minute to chaos in the next. How the SF Soldier reacts not only with host nation personnel, but also with members of his own team will determine mission success or failure.

Pulakos et al. define *Demonstrating Interpersonal Adaptability* as:

> Being flexible, open minded and cooperative when dealing with others; Listening to and considering others' viewpoints and opinions and altering one's opinion when the circumstance warrants; Begin open and receptive to negative or developmental feedback regarding work; Working well and developing effective relationships with highly diverse personalities; Demonstrating insight of others' behavior and tailoring own behavior to persuade, influence, or work more effectively with them.[29]

SF soldiers come from many diverse experiences and backgrounds. Members of SFODAs also are expected to offer more input regarding operations than their contemporaries in the General Purpose Forces. On an SFODA, the Officer commands,

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[28] Pulakos, "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance," 617.

[29] Pulakos, "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance," 617.

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but takes, receives, and considers many more suggestions, questions, and criticisms from the detachment members than his counterparts in an Infantry or Armor Company would; there the Commander's word is final and absolute. Also, attitudes on an SFODA are such that while rank does have its privileges, what counts most is experience. Members of the same rank on a detachment do not have the same status. A junior member of the Team needs to be able to receive and process feedback from those he might consider his peers, and adjust accordingly. This adaptability is what makes the SFODA such an effective fighting force.

> Pulakos et al. describe *Displaying Cultural Adaptability* as:

> Taking action to learn about and understand the climate, orientation, needs, values of other groups, organizations, and cultures; Integrating well and being comfortable with different values, customs, norms, and cultures; Willingly adjusting behavior or adjusting appearance as necessary to comply with or show respect for others' values and customs; Understanding the implications of one's actions and taking steps to maintain positive relationships with other groups, organizations, or cultures.[30]

Cultural adaptability is one of the cornerstones of being an SF soldier. SF soldiers conduct operations by, with, and through indigenous forces. Cultural adaptability is essential when working with indigenous forces. Getting soldiers from another country to do something that may cost them their lives requires cultural adaptability. Customs and courtesies, common in other countries, may be diametrically opposed to what is considered *normal* in America. Detachment members need to be adaptable to adopt these new customs and mores to ensure mission success. Based upon our co-authors' experiences, soldiers do not fight for people they do not respect.

E.   LEADING AN ADAPTABLE TEAM

As previously mentioned, White et al. added *leading an adaptable team* as a supplemental dimension to adaptive performance based upon Pulakos et al.'s previous research. According to White et al., leading an adaptable team pertains to the

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[30] Pulakos, "Adaptability in the Workplace: Development of a Taxonomy of Adaptive Performance," 617.

understanding of the SFODA's leadership ability "to enhance their team's capacity to adapt as an integrated unit."[31] The two main attributes of leading an adaptable team are communication/leadership styles and effective feedback.[32]

Based on our co-author's experiences, we feel that this dimension, as outlined by Pulakos et al., is too often ignored or even overlooked. The need for a team to be adaptable and for a leader to lead an adaptable team is paramount and could possibly spell the difference between mission success or mission failure. Leading an adaptable team is essential, for instance, when SF Soldiers deal with HN forces. There are numerous dilemmas that develop when militaries attempt to conduct joint operations. For example, often times a young SF Sergeant is required to plan, advise, and execute military operations with Officers of higher rank. Therefore, he must possess the mental skills to be flexible and adaptive enough to think on his feet to meet his commander's intent and the intent other forces, whether these are HN forces or even U.S. GPF.

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[31] Susan S. White et al., "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," 12.

[32] Susan S. White et al., "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," 12.

III. SUCCESSFUL ADAPTIVE TECHIQUES USED BY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the techniques and best practices used by the professional sports industry and at the United States Military Academy (USMA) for performance enhancement via mental skills. We use professional sports industry because professional athletes are considered elite and successful due to their level of play; Army Special Forces Soldiers can be likened to the Army's professional athletes with a similar need for a high level of physical fitness and mental dexterity. USMA was selected because cadets complete an academically rigorous and physically demanding regimen in order to graduate. All cadets at USMA are required to compete in Intramural Athletics, but some cadets compete on USMA's Division I Intercollegiate Athletic Teams. Both professional sports and the USMA teach mental skills techniques to their players and cadets in order to enhance their performance on the athletic field, in the classroom, and even on the battlefield.

B. PROFESSIONAL SPORTS

> There is no room in your mind for negative thoughts. The busier you keep yourself with the particulars of shot assessment and execution, the less chance your mind has to dwell on the emotional. This is sheer intensity.[33]
>
> *—Jack Nicklaus*

Professional athletes are known to be the elite of their particular sport. Similarly, Special Forces Soldiers are the elite soldiers of the U.S. Army. Both utilize many similar training techniques to maintain peak performance. However, one large difference in the

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[33] "Famous Sports Quotes."
http://www.quotemountain.com/quotes/sports_quotes/famous_sports_quotes/ accessed on 20 May 2010.

training programs between the two is that professional athletes focus on training both the physical and the mental aspects of their sport, whereas SF tends to mainly focus on the physical aspect of training.

Currently, SF utilizes several professional physical training programs, such as Cross fit, Military Athlete[34], Military Athlete[35], and many different forms of mixed-martial arts. As stated earlier, the only SF Soldiers receiving any mental training are Special Forces Officers (18A). According to Dr. Jack Rhodes, a well-known sports psychologist, "Mental skills training to develop the most relevant characteristics for the particular sport is essential in the early stages of the athlete's career. This is when a good foundation is formed that later helps to aim at higher achievement."[36]

If professional athletes and SF soldiers need similar attributes, then why are there no "mental training" regimens for SF students training in the SFQC? Giving SF soldiers instruction in mental skills during the Q Course would presumably help to give them a mental edge similar to that of professional athletes. It would lay the foundation so that the soldier would utilize these mental skills throughout his career.

While researching various mental skills techniques we found they were as varied as are sports and individual athletes themselves. While different sports and athletes utilize many varied techniques, five came through time and again in the recommended books and articles written on mental performance enhancement. They are: imagery or visualization, stress-management, self-talk, relaxation, and goal setting. In what follows we will describe each

1.   Imagery or Visualization

The first technique is imagery or visualization. According to Sheikh and Koran's book *Imagery in Sports and Physical Performance*, there are two types of imagery,

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[34] Crossfit San Diego. http://www.crossfitsandiego.com/SPECIALFORCESSELECTION.pdf accessed on 20 May 2010.

[35] Military Athlete. http://www.militaryathlete.com/page.php?page_ID=36 accessed on 20 May 2010.

[36] Rhodes, Jack. "Your Mental Gym," http://www.yourmentalgym.com/General_Sports_Mental_Training_Explained_Booklet.pdfk accessed on 20 May 2010.

internal and external. Internal imagery "an approximation of the real-life phenomenology such that a person is actually imagining being inside his/her body and experiencing those sensations that might be expected in the actual situation."[37]

An example of an imagery technique for a sprinter would be:
- Close your eyes, clear your mind and maintain deep rhythmical breathing, in through your nose and out through your mouth (physical cue)
-
- Imagine a previous race win, see yourself crossing the line in first place and recreate those emotional feelings of success (emotional cue)
-
- Return your focus to the sprint start, think of blasting off on the 'B' of the bang with the appropriate limb action (focus cue)[38]

According to J. Graham Jones and Lew Hardy, imagery has been very successful in the sports industry. "Imagery has been shown to be a powerful skill in both learning and performing physical skills. More specifically, imagery can be used to enhance learning, reduce warm-up time, reduce anxiety, and increase self-confidence."[39]

One set of athletes often overlooked are professional chess players. Chess players utilize visualization and imagery to achieve winning results. In Peter W. Frey's book, *Chess Skill in Man and Machine*, he defines chess as a game where "rules are clearly defined and yet the game is still complex enough to provide the flavor of a real-world problem."[40] As in chess, SF soldiers follow well-defined rules of engagement and constantly face complex, real-world problems.

Since there is a correlation between SF Soldiers and chess players, it is worth examining the techniques used to assist the chess player play more successfully. The two main techniques discussed in *Chess Skill in Man and Machine* are visualization and

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[37] Anees A. Sheikh and Errol R. Korn, "Imagery in Sports and Physical Performance," Baywood Pubhlishing Company, Inc., 1994, 76.

[38] "Developing Imagery Skills," http://www.brianmac.co.uk/mental.htm accessed on 20 May 2010.

[39] J. Graham Jones and Lew Hardy, *Stress and Performance in Sport*. Salisbury, Wiltshire: Associated Publishing Services (1990), 10.

[40] Peter W. Frey, *Chess Skill in Man and Machine* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1977), v.

imagery. The role of visual imagery in chess has long been of interest to psychologists. The ability to imagine pieces on squares in a chess position is correlated with chess skill.[41]

According to Frey's book, blind-folded chess players were still able to visualize the chess board. They did not visualize what the pieces looked like, but were able to mentally track all pieces on the board. However, this experiment also concluded it took a very experienced chess player to utilize the visualization and imagery techniques to manage the locations, next moves, and overall situational awareness needed to effectively play the game.[42] Visualization could help the SF soldier visualize not only a specific sequence or drill, but also the battlefield more generally, which could make him more situationally aware.

2. Stress Management

The second mental technique is stress management. Stress is often considered to be an inhibitor of optimal performance. The *American Heritage College* dictionary defines stress as a "mentally or emotionally disruptive or upsetting condition occurring in response to adverse external influences and usually characterized by increased heart rate, rise in blood pressure, muscular tension, irritability and depression; or a state of extreme difficulty, pressure, or strain."[43]

Jones and Hardy explain the importance of stress management in sports mostly: "many athletes seem to perform better in practice, in less important competitions vis-à-vis more important ones, and when chances of winning were low than high."[44] An example of some stress management guidelines are:

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[41] Peter W. Frey, *Chess Skill in Man and Machine* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1977), 48.

[42] Peter W. Frey, *Chess Skill in Man and Machine* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1977), 47–48.

[43] Stress. *The American Heritage College Dictionary,* 3rd ed., 1993.

[44] J. Graham Jones and Lew Hardy, *Stress and Performance in Sport.* (Salisbury, Wiltshire: Associated Publishing Services, 1990), 171.

- Aim to exercise regularly. Exercise dissipates the adrenaline that builds up in stressful situations and leaves us with a feeling of achievement and control.

- Make sure you are getting enough sleep. People need varying amounts ranging from 5 or 6 hours to 10 hours a night. By trial and error, you will know how much sleep YOU need to perform at your best.

- If you feel a panic or anxiety attack coming on, think through the problem by breaking it down. Imagine the worst that can happen. Nine times out of ten, it then appears less serious.

- Remember that you are human and mistakes are inevitable. Learn to view mistakes as learning opportunities and problems as challenges.[45]

3. Self-Talk

The third mental technique is self-talk. Several different types of self-talk exist, but for the purpose of this thesis we will delineate between instructional and motivational self-talk. According to David A. Tod et al.:

> **Motivational self-talk** is "designed to assist performance by increasing confidence, effort, and energy expenditure and by creating a positive mood. An example of motivational self talk for a professional jumper is I can jump high" during the 15 seconds preceding the jump test.
>
> **Instructional self-talk** is designed to facilitate performance by triggering desired movement through correct attentional focus, technique, and strategy execution.[46] An example of motivational self talk for the same jumper is "Bend and dive" during the final 15 seconds preceding the jump test.[47]

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[45] "Stress Management," http://www.brianmac.co.uk/stress.htm accessed 25 May 2010.

[46] David A. Tod, Rhys Thatcher, Michael McGuigan, and Joanne Thatcher, "Effects of Instructional and Motivational Self-Talk on the Vertical Jump," *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* (2009): 196.

[47] David A. Tod, Rhys Thatcher, Michael McGuigan, and Joanne Thatcher, "Effects of Instructional and Motivational Self-Talk on the Vertical Jump," *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* (2009): 198.

4. Relaxation

The fourth mental technique is relaxation. According to Brian Mac, who is a Sports Coach to athletes in the United Kingdom, the following are the benefits from relaxation techniques: "the promotion of rest, recovery and recuperation, the removal of stress related reactions, e.g., increased muscular tension, etc., the establishing of a set level of physical and mental arousal prior to warming up for competition."[48] An example of a relaxation technique follows:

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, arms hanging loosely by your side

- Close your eyes and breathe evenly - try to keep the tension in the upper body to a minimum as you breathe

- Inhale deeply from your abdomen (your stomach will extend) and be aware of the tension in your face, neck, shoulders and chest. As you exhale let the tension fall away and focus on the feeling of heaviness in your stomach

- Continue to breathe evenly and deeply and focus your attention on the center of your body, the area just behind your navel

- Maintain your attention on that spot and continue to breath evenly and deeply, feeling controlled, heavy and calm

- As you breathe out, think of a word that encapsulates the physical feeling and mental focus you want e.g., "relax," "calm."[49]

5. Goal Setting

The fifth mental technique commonly used is goal setting. According to Damon Burton, Sarah Naylor, and Bernie Holiday, "Goals are cognitive mechanisms that describe what an individual is trying to accomplish."[50] The process to establish those

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[48] "Relaxation," http://www.brianmac.co.uk/relaxation.htm accessed on 20 May 2010.

[49] "Relaxation," http://www.brianmac.co.uk/relaxation.htm accessed on 20 May 2010.

[50] D. Burton, S. Naylor, and B. Holliday. "Goal setting in sport: Investigating the goal effectiveness paradox." In R. N. Singer, H. A. Hausenblas, and C. M. Janelle (Eds.), *Handbook of Sport Psychology,* 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001), 497–528.

goals is what comprises goal setting. Jones and Hardy describe goal setting as a technique utilized by the individual to achieve a higher level of performance. For example,

> Specific, challenging goals lead to better performance than moderate or easy goals; short-term goals or sub goals are important in the attainment of long-term goals; and, competition may improve performance through the setting of higher goals.[51]

An example of goal setting methodology follows:

- *Make goals as specific as possible*. "To compete in the Olympics." Well, as admirable as that is, you need to ask when, in what sport, in what event? [52]

- *Divide long-term goals into short-term goals with deadlines and prioritie*s. "To complete in the Olympics in four years time, in the 100 meters (athletics)." This gives more direction. However, what do you need to do in three years time to be on track to achieve your Olympic dream? What about this season? What about this week? By creating 'stepping stones' the path to your ultimate goal will become much more clear. It may become apparent that to achieve one goal you may have to trade off against another – so know your priorities.[53]

- *Set measurable goals*. "Work hard in training" indicates the right sentiment, but will not provide guidance towards your goal. "Attend every session this month" or "Hold a pulse rate of 170 for this next set" however, might. [54]

- *Make goals challenging but achievable*. You have to be able to decide, with all available help, whether your goals are achievable. Even if you have been identified as a talented athlete, the chances

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[51] J. Graham Jones and Lew Hardy, "Stress and Performance in Sport," Associated Publishing Services, Salisbury, Wiltshire, 1990, 10.

[52] Rob Robson, "Goal Setting for Sports Performance," http://istadia.com/article/robrobson/6 accessed on 25 May 2010.

[53] Rob Robson, "Goal Setting for Sports Performance,"http://istadia.com/article/robrobson/6 accessed on 25 May 2010.

[54] Rob Robson, "Goal Setting for Sports Performance,"http://istadia.com/article/robrobson/6 accessed on 25 May 2010.

of reaching the Olympics may be slim. Slim is fine – remember your goals must be challenging – but goals set too high can de motivate rather than motivate. [55]

- *Evaluate your progress regularly, and be flexible*. With your measurable goals, that provide stepping stones to your ultimate goal, you will be able to see how well you are progressing. If, two years before the Olympics, you break you leg, you might still achieve your final goal, but you will have to alter the stepping stones. If you break it six weeks before the games, however, your final goal will have to change. If you achieve your goals before you expected to, set new ones. [56]

- *Consider writing down your goals, and share them*. We tend to commit to goals that are written down, and shared goals (either as part of the process or after they have been set) are more effective still. If you keep a training or competition log (there's a tip!) this might be the ideal place to keep your goals written down. However, this is very much down to individual preference.[57]

Warren R. Johnson further explains motivations or *goal setting* in these terms: "motivation plays a central role in arousing habits to action and in the acquisition of habits, but the habits themselves, not the drives or motives, channel the behavior in this direction or that."[58]

As mentioned previously, these five techniques just outlined are those most frequently used by many athletes and coaches in a variety of sports. There are a wide-array of methods of application for each one and we have only provided a sample

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[55] Rob Robson, "Goal Setting for Sports Performance,"http://istadia.com/article/robrobson/6 accessed on 25 May 2010.

[56] Rob Robson, "Goal Setting for Sports Performance,"http://istadia.com/article/robrobson/6 accessed on 25 May 2010.

[57] Rob Robson, "Goal Setting for Sports Performance,"http://istadia.com/article/robrobson/6 accessed on 25 May 2010.

[58] Warren R. Johnson, "Science and Medicine of Exercise and Sports," (Harper and Row Publishers, NY 2007): 533.

illustration. The point is not there is ample flexibility about technique, and specific methods available to the individual athlete, just as there would be to the SF Soldier.

C.   UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

The USMA Center for Enhanced Performance (CEP), is a state-of-the-art facility for training cadets in applied sport psychology[59]. This center was originally established in 1989 as the Performance Enhancement Center (PEC) to educate and train West Point cadets in performance enhancement techniques to foster their full development as leaders of character. In 1992, the Academy's Reading and Study Skills Program joined PEC to form the Center for Enhanced Performance (CEP). In 2004, the Army Chief of Staff directed the CEP to develop an Army-wide program headquartered under the CEP at West Point, called the Army Center for Enhanced Performance (ACEP).[60]

The ACEP at West Point, along with centers at outlying locations, uses the Performance Enhancement Education Model (Figure 1). This model is the product of over 50 years of scientific research drawing from best practices in the field of sport and performance psychology.[61] The tenets underlying excellence in human performance are applicable to all professional occupations.[62] ACEP trainers use the Performance Education Model, to teach the five interrelated mental skills that they believe will improve the quality and consistency of performance of soldiers and provide them with the mental skills foundation they will need in the field.

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[59] Gregory A. Burbelo, Pierre D. Gervais, Larry D. Perkins, Nathaniel Zinsser. "Military Application ofPerformance-Enhancement Psychology" In *Military Review Sep-Oct 2004. 62.*

[60] Army Center for Enhanced Performance. *2007–2009 Executive Summary Report*, New York, West Point 2010, 2.

[61] Army Center for Enhanced Performance. *2007–2009 Executive Summary Report*, 3.

[62] Army Center for Enhanced Performance. *2007–2009 Executive Summary Report*, 3.

Figure 1.   Performance, Enhancement, Education Model[63]

1.   Building Confidence

The first of the ACEP's five mental skills is Building Confidence (Figure 2). Confidence is using effective thinking skills to control the mind and create energy, optimism and enthusiasm.[64] Confidence is a critical attribute for USMA Cadets, Soldiers, and especially Leaders. To achieve a high level of performance, a Soldier must understand the strategies for building, sustaining, and protecting confidence. A confident individual is mentally agile and makes better decisions.[65] This mentally agility is an important attribute for Cadets, Athletes, Conventional Army, and Special Forces Soldiers.

Figure 2.   Building Confidence as Part of the Performance, Enhancement, Education
Model[66]

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[63] Army Center for Enhanced Performance. *2007–2009 Executive Summary Report* (U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY, 2010) West Point 2010, 3.

[64] Army Center for Enhanced Performance Overview Slideshow. Briefed 14 June 2010. Slide 9

[65] Army Center for Enhanced Performance. *2007–2009 Executive Summary Report* ,3.

[66] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010* (U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY, 2010), 23.

Some of the tools utilized in building and improving confidence are:

1) **Selective Perception**: deliberately focusing your mind on certain thoughts and memories, which creates energy, optimism, and enthusiasm. ACEP teaches that by utilizing the mental filter (Figure 3), the soldier can accept and reflect on praise, success, and achievement, while receiving criticism with that failure, and setbacks developed from performance through a loss of confidence, enthusiasm, or a diminished self-image.[67]

YOUR MENTAL FILTER

Praise, Success, Achievement

Criticism, Failures, Setbacks

Lesson Learned.
Confidence, Optimism, Enthusiasm, Powerful Self-Image

Figure 3.   The Mental Filter[68]

2) **Positive Self-Talk (offense)**: The ACEP also teaches building confidence by using belief statements for positive self-talk. Positive self-talk is a way to counter doubt and negative self talk by reinforcing belief and confidence in one's self. Someone who utilizes positive self-talk, will likely have a positive performance outcome. The following checklist is used to create effective positive belief statements:[69]

- Is the belief statement phrased in the first person?
- Is the belief statement phrased in the present tense?
- Does the belief statement use affirmative language?
- Does it create vivid imagery?

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[67] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 23.

[68] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 23.

[69] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,*31.

- Does it create the right emotions?
- Is it powerful?
- Is it personal and meaningful?

3) A second part of positive Self-Talk is **Playing Defense** against negative self-talk. No matter how experienced, skilled, or talented, everyone has moments of negative self-talk. Prevention and management of negative self-talk enables the individual to keep it from inhibiting performance. Stopping negative self-talk enables the soldier to refocus and take control of his thoughts. Below is a Thought Stopping Technique:[70]

- Recognize the negative self-talk
- Interrupt the thought out loud or silently
- Attach a cue to reset
- Take a deep breath and exhale
- Replace with a more helpful thought

Utilizing the aforementioned techniques will enable the individual soldier to focus on positive aspects of performance, filter out the negative cues and self doubt, and successfully execute the task at hand. This is applicable to SF soldiers in both training environments and in combat.

2. Goal Setting

The second ACEP technique is Goal Setting (Figure 4). Goal setting defines a goal, dream, or objective that is personally meaningful to the individual or unit. Once the goal is defined, the person or unit develops the steps to create a well, documented path to success.[71] These steps comprise a plan that demands a great level of commitment. With the goal established, the individual or unit then creates priorities, actions, and a belief statement. Goal setting assists individuals in pursuing and achieving excellence and promotes a culture that moves well beyond norms and expectations.[72]

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[70] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 32.

[71] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 55.

[72] Army Center for Enhanced Performance. 2007–2009 Executive Summary Report, 3.

Figure 4.   Goal Setting as Part of the Performance, Enhancement, Education Model:[73]

Goal setting's effectiveness comes from directing the individual's attention and retaining focus.   A Goal mobilizes effort, motivates mission accomplishment, and increases an individual's persistence and perseverance. Setting and having goals assist in the discovery of new strategies and techniques because there are multiple ways of accomplishing them. In goal setting, the goals must be tailored to the individual or unit. The objectives along the way to achieving the goal must be readily visible because if they are not visible, the individual or unit may get discouraged.

The ACEP uses a Seven-Step Process of Goal Setting.[74] This process assists the individual or unit in goal development and achievement. It is important to remember that this process is fluid and subject to changes as the unit, mission, situation, or individual changes, and as the individual or unit increase in competence and confidence.[75] The ACEP Seven-Step Process of Goal Setting is displayed in Figure 5:

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[73] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 55.

[74] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 57.

[75] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010*, 57.
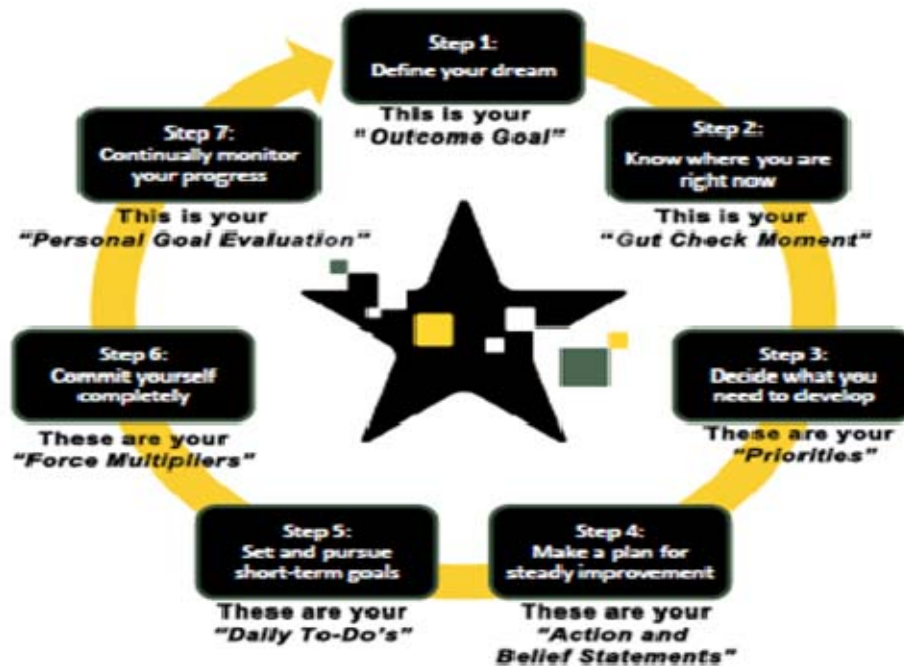
Figure 5.   Goal Setting Methodology[76]

Following these steps will assist the individual or unit set realistic, attainable goals and develop a plan of action for achieving them.

3.   Attention Control

The third ACEP technique is attention control. In today's Army, soldiers are expected to handle numerous tasks ranging from mundane to mission critical, and to also conduct several of these tasks in concert with each other. The ability of an individual to conduct several tasks nearly simultaneously one that can be enhanced through repetition and practice.

Through the use of Attention Control, the Soldier can enhance his ability to manage tasks by utilizing techniques to identify and prioritize tasks. According to the ACEP, Attention Control is "the strength to concentrate amidst distractions and remain

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[76] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010* (U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY, 2010) 57.

mentally agile when confronted with an ever-changing 360 degree battlefield."[77] Soldiers are continually operating in environments where the ability to maintain their attention may be paramount to mission success or failure.

To assist with the training of Attention Control, the ACEP identifies four questions that an individual can ask himself. These are:

- What's important now?

- How to get there?

- How to stay there?

- How to get back when distracted?[78]

These questions help the soldier identify what is pertinent and prioritize the necessary skills for mission accomplishment. In asking the question, "What is important now?" the soldier is able to identify from a list of skills necessary for task accomplishment, which is the most important, and to then focus attention to this area. According to the ACEP, if an individual tries to focus simultaneously on all necessary skills to accomplish the desired task this can lead a "paralysis by analysis."[79] In this situation, an individual has tried to devote attention to all areas of a task, possibly resulting in "clumsy mechanics, mental confusion, and impaired reaction time."[80] According to the ACEP, the brain and body will operate optimally if a soldier can devote his attention to the "one thing" that is important. Through the practice of task identification, the Soldier can focus his attention to the most critical area of a task, allowing his training to take care of the incidental portions of the task (Figure 6).

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[77] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 33.

[78] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 35.

[79] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 36.

[80] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 36.

Figure 6.　　　　Cadets Using Resources at CEP[81]

Once the soldier has identified the critical "one thing" necessary for mission accomplishment, he must identify how the task should be accomplished. Through the use of personalized "attention cues" a soldier can effectively focus on what is important at that moment in time to reach the desired end state. According to the ACEP, attention cues fall into two categories. These are: (1) identified task or technique (2) an identified emotional or mental state.[82] The ability to identify the necessary task or techniques is essentially what an individual needs to "do," while an individual's emotional or mental state during the task can be considered the "mindset and attitude" for the execution of the task.[83] Through the use of personal attention cues, a soldier is able to quickly reference back to the necessary tasks or techniques for mission accomplishment and the necessary emotional or mental state needed for optimal performance during execution.

Another technique includes the use of personal routines to answer the question of "how to get there." According to the ACEP, a routine can be considered a three to five

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[81] Photo given by Dr. Nathaniel Zinnser to demonstrate the use of biofeedback during a performance enhancement training session at the United States Military Academy

[82] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 37.

[83] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 37.

step process an individual would conduct to focus attention on a desired target, simultaneously creating a level of unconscious confidence in the individual.[84] The use of a routine helps to funnel one's attention from insignificant distracters to what is important. By identifying routines for functions, a soldier is able to develop a process that his mind and body will follow instinctively to accomplish a desired task.

The use of a routine can also have a beneficial effect when things are not going as planned. A routine can keep an individual calm in a stressful or uncomfortable situation in the present, enabling him to make decision. Many times soldiers are faced with a situation where a poor decision or an unforeseen circumstance causes a wrinkle in the plan. The ability of a Soldier to identify what can and cannot be controlled and continue moving forward can be enhanced through the use of a routine. Once an individual is able to identify a situation as uncontrollable, a routine can help focus the individual back to the task at hand, mentally moving forward and applying focus to those areas that are controllable.

4. Energy Management

The fourth ACEP technique is Energy Management. Based on the current OPTEMO of military units, we are continually asking soldiers to perform at optimal levels for extended periods. This requires the ability to manage an individual's energy outputs and inputs. The ACEP defines Energy Management as "effectively mobilizing, sustaining, and restoring energy to thrive during times of extreme stress."[85] During times of extreme stress the body utilizes energy at a higher rate, which is harder to sustain for extended periods. Through the practice of Energy Management, a soldier can adopt techniques that will ensure energy is available for optimal operation when necessary.

One of the most important ways to manage one's energy is to obtain sufficient sleep. As with Attention Control, the use of a routine can help maintain proper sleep levels. By utilizing a sleep routine the body can maximize the energy recovered from the

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[84] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 38.

[85] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010*, 43.

limited amount of sleep available. Understandably, a soldier on deployment may find the thought of working from 9 to 5 somewhat humorous. However, attempting to maintain a sleep schedule can assist with energy management.

Another technique for maximizing the benefits of sleep is to practice and utilize relaxation techniques prior to going to sleep. According to the ACEP, the use of deliberate relaxation exercises, such as tactical breathing, can enhance biochemical responses that assist with falling asleep, maximizing the energy return on the limited amount of time available for sleep.[86] The ability to reenergize through sleep should not be limited to just time; through the use of a 20 minute power nap, the body is able to recharge enough to continue moving forward to mission accomplishment.[87]

Along with obtaining the proper levels of sleep, an individual must also be able to manage the body's responses to stressful situations. During a stressful situation, the body involuntarily reacts in different ways to help overcome the situation. One must be able to recognize that these changes are the body's adaptation to the stressful situation. Some of these reactions are dry mouth, rapid breathing, increased heart rate, increased sweating and trembling[88]. While all of these involuntary changes may be uncomfortable to the individual, these changes help the body perform optimally in stressful situations.[89]

According to the ACEP, "everything your body provides during stressful moments is good for performance."[90] The ability to identify these body changes and embrace their positive effects should be considered an advantage in stressful situations, not a distracter.

5. Integrating Imagery

The fifth and final ACEP technique is Integrating Imagery. Through the use of imagery, the techniques of Building Confidence, Goal Setting, Attention Control, and

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[86] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 45.

[87] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 45.

[88] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 47.

[89] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 47.

[90] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 47.

Energy Management can be integrated. Integrating Imagery can be described as "envisioning successful outcomes enhances technical and tactical skills and increases confidence, concentration, and composure."[91] (See Figure 7.)

Figure 7.   Cadets Using CEP Technology to Train[92]

Through the use of imagery a soldier is able to develop a mental picture of how an event will unfold. Successful outcomes envisioned in the mind can have a beneficial effect during execution of a mission. Imagery can help the body during execution

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[91] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 73.

[92] Photo given by Dr. Nathaniel Zinnser to demonstrate the use of imagery during a performance enhancement training session for football players and rifle marksmen at the United States Military Academy

through muscle memory.[93] If a task has been envisioned prior to execution, the individual has gone through the steps of how the task needs to be accomplished. The mind has rehearsed the identified actions and motions needed to execute the task, creating a muscle memory function without the physical execution. While the physical rehearsal of a task is preferred, some tasks may be hard or next to impossible to replicate. Through the creation of a highly vivid image, a soldier is able to rehearse a task mentally enhancing muscle memory and confidence. This feeling of having done a task prior to execution can also give the body a "déjà vu" experience. The feeling of having done an envisioned task before, can allow the body to act more intuitively and instinctively during execution.[94] Through the practice of imagery, a soldier can continue his mental rehearsals long after the physical rehearsals are complete.

By comparing the techniques taught to cadets and soldiers from the ACEP, to the techniques taught to professional athletes, it is evident there is a significant amount of overlap. This overlap is natural as there are many similarities between athletes and soldiers. Both operate as members of a team. In today's operational context, conventional soldiers conducting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan do so in units as small as a nine- man squad or a 40-man platoon, much like a sports team. SFODAs, the Army's elite athletes, operate in 12-man teams with groups of indigenous personnel. All of these units and teams must operate at an optimal level every time they enter the arena, be it the sports field or the battlefield. Unlike their conventional counterparts, SFODAs do not have a backup platoon or company to pull from and the ODAs conduct one operation after another, with minimal time to plan, regroup, refit, rest, or train. This is where the mental skills studied by sports psychologists and the ACEP would be of benefit. Having these mental skills would enable SF soldiers to operate at their optimal level, longer, and despite extreme external conditions.

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[93] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 76.

[94] Army Center of Enhanced Performance, *Enhancement Resiliency Training, Student Guide 2010,* 76.

IV. THE STAR OF ADAPTABILITY AND APPLICATIONS TO ARMY SPECIAL FORCES

> Becoming an adaptable leader is hard. It is easy to follow directions. Leading requires a lot of brain power and a lot of will power and a lot of training and education. Being adaptable to anything is hard and takes time. Think of adapting to the altitude in Afghanistan or the heat in Iraq. That takes time and effort and is a strictly bodily process. Mental processes are that much harder.[95]
>
> *—CSM David M. Bruner (Special Forces)*

This chapter introduces the Star of Adaptability and its potential application in the daily, ambiguous environment of a U.S. Army Special Forces Soldier (ARSOF). The applications are not all inclusive to every situation. However, these scenarios do provide a foundation for the ARSOF Soldier to reference and are flexible enough to apply to all of the five SF core missions. Essentially, these "performance enhancement techniques enable individuals to perform their best in all situations."[96]

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[95] David M. Bruner, "What is an adaptive leader?" *NCO Journal* 18 no. 3, Summer 2009, 22–24.

[96] Major Robert B. Brown and Colonel Louis S. Csoka, "Performance Enhancement The Mental Edge for Leadership" *Military Review* August 1993, 32.

A.   INTRODUCTION TO THE STAR OF ADAPTABILITY

The *Star of Adaptability* captures and combines Pulakos et al.'s nine dimensions and the ACEPs mental skills (Figure 8). Additionally, the Star of Adaptability includes all five SF core missions. This Star of Adaptability can be utilized as a reference card or graphic training aid (GTA).

STAR OF ADAPTABILITY

Figure 8.   Star of Adaptability

B. REMINISCING AND BRIGHT IDEAS

To better demonstrate how the Adaptive Skills Training will enhance the Soldier's performance both in training and in war, we next describe a hypothetical encounter among classmates from the SFQC five years after their graduation. After graduation, all three Soldiers were assigned to different Special Forces Groups and conducted operations in Southwest and Central Asia, and Latin America. As officers in the SFQC, they went through the Adaptive Skills training, which incorporated the O-ATL in conjunction with the Mental Skills Foundation training from West Point.

To further set the scene: this is the first time that Dave (formerly of 5th Special Forces Group with combat tours in Iraq), Jake (formerly of 3rd Special Forces Group with a combat tour in Afghanistan and training missions to Pakistan), and Bill (formerly of 7th Special Forces Group with combat rotations to Afghanistan and numerous training rotations within Latin America) have been back together since the SFQC. Over dinner Dave, Jake, and Bill are catching up on what has happened over the past five years and they share some of their more poignant experiences. Once the normal pleasantries about family and friends have died down, the conversation turns to common memories from the SFQC and the lessons learned from the combat zone and their training experiences. All three are in agreement that the Adaptive Skills Training consisting of the O-ATL and the Mental Skills Foundation Training taught during the SFQC have been beneficial to their success while serving at an operational Special Forces Group.

Dave: You guys remember the Adaptive Skills Training from the Q Course?

Jake: Sure, but all I seem to remember from that is the basketball players with the gorilla video.

Bill: I remember that training and the gorilla video too.

Dave: Did you guys find it helpful at all, or was it a waste of time?

Jake: Man, I hate to say I have to eat my words. I did not believe in it back then, but I found it very helpful, especially in combat.

Dave: Really, you used some of those techniques they taught us? How did they help?

Jake: Well, we had been in Afghanistan for about five months and we were about to conduct what was supposed to be another uneventful Combat Reconnaissance Patrol (CRP) in Afghanistan. My ODA recently had a significant personnel turnover after its prior deployment. We had a bunch of new guys out of the Q Course and it was my first rodeo as the Team Leader.

Bill: Sounds like you were being set up for success.

Jake: We had been in-country for a couple of months and had minimal contact with the enemy. Things seemed quiet on the surface, but sometimes you just got that feeling that something was brewing. As we left the firebase this one day, all was very similar to the previous hundreds of times we had gone out before. However, about five minutes into the patrol the team sergeant, who was riding in the rear vehicle, noticed something was off.

It was too quiet on the usually crowded road. All of a sudden, the rear vehicle explodes after a Remote-Controlled Improvised Explosive Device (RCIED) detonates. My team sergeant, the most experienced SF Solider on the team, is severely injured along with two others in the same vehicle. To make matters worse, we were receiving effective enemy fire from the flank.

Dave: Man, that is a heck of a situation for a brand new team leader, what did you do?"

Jake: Well, as you guys know there's a lot going on and too many decisions that have to be made right then, AND we had a bunch of bad guys shooting at us!

Dave: Man, don't the first few seconds seem like an eternity?

Jake: They do, but in order to keep calm and to keep things in perspective I took a deep breath and prioritized what was the most important thing to do at that moment. I didn't realize that what I was doing was just like what they taught us till afterwards when I was thinking about it, but number one on my list was to get whoever was shooting at us

to stop shooting. After that it became medical care for the injured team members and their subsequent medical evacuation. Third, was to check weapons, ammo, equipment and where to go from there.

Once I got the initial Situational Report (SITREP) and Troops-In-Contact (TIC) called out, we began maneuvering against the enemy. Not to mention we had some Host Nation Security Forces with us. It's difficult enough going through a contact with your own team, but more difficult when you have to do it with guys who do not speak the same language and must rely on an interpreter. To keep deciding what to do, I kept figuring out what was important at the time and tried to only focus on those tasks as best as we could.

Dave: That's sounds like the Attention Control technique that we learned from the Mental Skills Foundation Training.

Jake: Yep, we were able to fight our way through the ambush, break contact, and treat and evacuate the wounded. By prioritizing the most important thing and taking it step-by-step, this allowed me to remain focused in one of the most chaotic environments of my life.

Jake: I have one more example of a Mental Skills Foundation technique that my team utilized during pre-mission training. It was the way we practiced radio calls. It seemed kind of silly at first, but it turned out to really help. We would get together in the Team Room and practice talking through the procedures to call Close Air Support (CAS), SITREPS, (TIC) and all the other calls we might make on the radio. Also, it was our Battalion Commander's policy to always sound calm, cool and collected on the radio. I did not realize the method behind the madness, but a cool voice on the radio can actually project calmness and have a soothing effect for the guys next to you and also for those guys at headquarters that are supporting you. This was the Mental Skills Foundation's visualization and imagery technique put into practice. By practicing visualization and imagery, and by conducting rehearsals, we had gone through worst case scenarios many times, so when we really were in the worst case scenario it was not so overwhelming. I never realized that something so simple could pay such big dividends for us in combat."

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Bill: No two ways about it, Adaptability training helped me make up for my lack of experience and make decisions and function. Remember what the instructors kept telling us in the Q Course, "Anything you do – including nothing – can and will get you killed."

Dave: Yeah, you know, I haven't only used our Adaptive Skills Training in combat. They also helped me during training – like during Jumpmaster School. Right after we returned from Iraq, a Jumpmaster Mobile Training Team came to Campbell. I was able to get on the list and get into the class. You want to talk about stress? I was nervous about the academic tests, but it didn't compare to the feeling I got in my stomach when it was time for Jumpmaster Personnel Inspection (JMPI) Test

Jake: Yeah, imagine passing everything, all the academic requirements in the course, and then having to do the duffle bag drag because you failed JMPI.

Dave: That was one of my biggest concerns. I didn't want to become so worried about failing that I focused my energy on thinking about that instead of focusing on what it took to succeed.

Jake: Yeah, but you have to make sure that you don't let worrying about JMPI cause you to overlook the academic tests and the other requirements. "So the real trick is to balance what you are worrying about.

They all laughed.

Dave: We had a couple of guys fail the course because they couldn't focus on the next task because they were too busy worrying about the JMPI Test, which doesn't happen right until the end of the course. So I ended up using imagery and visualization, I'd say they weren't just very useful, but even downright essential. Someone I found really interesting was this Sergeant First Class in the course with me who had developed a little song for the JMPI sequence. I thought it was goofy, but this guy passed with flying colors. He had his sequence wired tight and I knew it was the song that helped him do it. It made the movements and the sequences second nature. When I asked him where he learned to do that, he said, "I'm an 18D by trade. I couldn't have passed the Medic Course without a way to learn and retain all sorts of information and sequences."

I used visualization to run through rehearsals and the JMPI sequence in my head thousands of times. As you all know, knowing the sequence cold is going to boost your confidence and that confidence is going to eliminate the distracters and that is what is going to enable you to pass.

Bill and Jake: I agree.

Dave: Of course I was trying to explain this training to my father-in-law, who was a crusty old team sergeant, and he couldn't believe how childish it sounded when I explained to him the Adaptive Skills Training we received in the Q Course. I used one of his favorite movies, *For the Love of the Game*, as an example of this training and its value even a skeptic could appreciate. I asked him if he remembered the scene where Kevin Costner is the pitcher for the Detroit Lions and does his routine of "clear the mechanism." In the movie, Kevin Costner is on the pitcher's mound and notices all of the distractions such as the score of the game, the roar of the nearby train, and the heckling of the crowd-so many distractions that it is next to impossible for him to do his job as the pitcher. Kevin Costner is able to use a mental cue by telling himself to 'clear the mechanism' clearing out all the distractions so he can focus his entire attention at the most important thing at the time, the batter.

Bill: Yeah, I remember that scene.

Dave: Believe it or not, my father-in-law started nodding his head, saying he has uses something similar whenever he finds himself in stressful situations that require his full concentration.

Jake: This Adaptive Skills stuff is nothing new, and guys have been doing it for years, but just haven't realized it.

Dave: That's what I told him. The only difference is that these techniques have now been formalized and are actually being disseminated not only to SF guys but also to GPF.

Bill: You know we definitely all do this. I used it on my recent trip to Colombia. My detachment and I had gone down to conduct a JCET. Unfortunately, this trip was on

short notice, and we were deployed to an area new to us. We were given very little time to prepare for our trip and were forced to rely on a site survey conducted by another detachment that had recently conducted a similar mission."

Jake: Man, talk about a monkey wrench in the works.

Bill: Yeah, upon our arrival in-country and as soon as we linked up with the HN force, we find out that the HN Commander had specifically requested air assault training to be incorporated into the training plan. You're thinking no big deal, right? Well, the HN Unit and U.S. representatives had not agreed to conduct Air Assault training.

Jake: So, what did you guys do?

Bill: Well, we informed the Country Team of the discrepancy, only to be told there were no aircraft available to support the training. Additionally, we didn't have access to any suitable rappel towers on the training base,"

Dave and Jake: Man, that's a serious predicament.

Bill: It sure seemed like we were about to blow our rapport with the HN Unit, that's for sure. Believe it or not, we had a very innovative group of NCOs, who helped save the day. It's funny, but self perception had a lot to do with solving this problem.

Dave: How so?

Bill: Well, remember, we're always told that SF guys are problem solvers, right? That's what makes ODAs so effective; they always find a solution to tough problems. Well, we adopted that philosophy and used it to our advantage. We broke down the problem and began to reassess our situation. We then established new goals, based on the situation at hand and what we had to work with. The main and most pressing issue was to do some kind of air assault training and reestablish rapport with the HN.

Jake: Hey that sounds a lot like the Goal Setting techniques trained during Adaptive Skills during the Q Course.

Bill: Would you believe our solution came from one of the youngest members of the Team? We were sitting around collectively thinking about how to solve this air assault problem and one of my new Engineer Sergeants fresh out of the Q Course asks,

"What about the water towers?" "What about them?" the Team Sergeant skeptically replied. Well, the kid remembered seeing concrete water towers on the base as we were moving around the HN headquarters. He had this crazy idea and envisioned attaching planks down the side of the water tower to make an improvised rappel tower. So, after a thorough inspection and after we did risk identification and mitigation, the team decided we could utilize the water tower for air assault training. So, even though the rappelling platform was nowhere near what we or the HN Commander had expected, it more than allowed us to accomplish the air assault training to standard for the HN."

Jake: That kid was on it, too bad all of our SF Soldiers coming to the team aren't like him. But, I do see where the Adaptive Skills Training has helped, both the inexperienced and experienced guys.

Dave: How so?

Jake: Whether you come from a combat arms MOS with multiple combat tours or you are a non-combat arms MOS with little to no experience downrange, Adaptive Skills training can benefit no matter what the experience level. Without the ability to rely on your experience, Adaptive Skills helps to fill the gap for some of these younger, inexperienced soldiers. However, for those soldiers with a lot of experience, it helps to refine the skills they already have, making them even more effective.

Dave: Yep, unfortunately, my experience says that if we don't get to sleep soon, we'll end up really regretting it tomorrow….

Bill: For sure, we're not as young as we once were are we?

Jake: Maybe one day there'll be an Adaptive Skill that makes up for <u>no</u> sleep, instead of the one that tells you to get sleep.

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V.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A.   CONCLUSION

In summation, incorporating the ACEP's mental enhancement techniques into the SFQC would be highly beneficial. These techniques have applications to assist the SF Soldier in adaptive problem solving and enabling better performance regardless of the situation or environment. As battle drills and technology have evolved over time, so has the need for mental skills evolution. As exemplified by success in the sports industry and of West Point, athletes and cadets who utilize these techniques increase their mental edge and perform more optimally.

Introduction to instruction in and application of these techniques should begin after SFAS in order to provide more skills to students to assist them as they go through the Q Course and to introduce this nebulous concept early in their special operations career. Eventually, mental skills enhancement can become standard POI incorporated into training calendars, similar to an airborne operation or advanced marksmanship training. Because these mental skills techniques are perishable, they must be practiced routinely. Until the establishment of a mental skills facility at each SF Group occurs, there are ACEP trainers located at various posts throughout the nation to facilitate training and maintain relevancy.

The taxonomy developed by Pulakos et. al gives us a list of dimensions and areas an SF Soldier needs to overcome in order to think adaptively. While this list identifies the "what" in terms of which mental skills an SF Soldier needs, this thesis has offered the "how" based upon three different SF Officers' perspectives, with each of us coming from a different SF Group. Granted, the use of the techniques described might not solve every dilemma successfully; however, these skills give the SF Soldier another tool for his kit bag, particularly when he finds himself in unfamiliar or ambiguous situations.

The techniques used in the sports industry and at West Point are very similar and differ primarily in their nomenclature. We chose to utilize West Point's nomenclature for

relative ease vis-à-vis SF tasks. We chose a number of likely scenarios to illustrate how useful the mental skills would be both in training and in combat. There are several ways to skin the cat. Flexibility in choosing the appropriate technique suitable in any given situation further points to why the SFQC needs to implement a formal mental skills program for all SF soldiers.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implementation Into the Special Forces Pipeline

Based on previous study, USAJFKSWCS has identified the need for SF soldiers to be adaptable leaders in any environment. To enhance the adaptability of SF Officers, USAJFKSWCS developed the O-ATL Course. While the O-ATL Course is an adequate classroom training event, aimed at enhancing adaptability in Special Forces Officers, more emphasis should be placed on this block of instruction. It should also expand to include all soldiers in the SFQC. Likewise, the period of instruction should be lengthened to allow the instructors to delve deeper into content. While some might argue that the O-ATL is designed solely for the SFODA leadership, all members of a detachment are supposed to be considered leaders capable of advising a battalion of indigenous soldiers.

Currently, the O-ATL training is limited to a classroom-based training event in which officers are trained in dimensions of adaptability thought necessary to be an effective SFODA Commander. Unfortunately, there is no complementary field problem during which students are required to practice these newly acquired skills outside the classroom. This approach is somewhat contradictory to training in the rest of the Army. Normally, once the classroom portion of a task has concluded, a field training exercise will follow to ensure the student can apply the newly learned skills.

According to White et al., the practical application of the O-ATL skills is in future training executed later in the SFQC.[97] Yet, as demonstrated earlier, these skills are

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[97] Susan S. White et al., "Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers," 5.

perishable and if not applied, will be lost. In fact, previous training exercises in the 18A Special Forces Officer Course could have benefited from having the current adaptability training precede the exercises. One such exercise was the Meadows Trek. During the Meadows Trek, students were separated and forced to operate individually in both rural and urban environments with limited to no access to resources. The students were assigned difficult tasks to complete at a location within a certain time limit. While this exercise was physically taxing and mentally stressful, it was also monitored. The student's performance was constantly evaluated and upon completion of the exercise the student was given a thorough debriefing. The performance feedback from the debriefing identified the students' strengths and weaknesses. This feedback allowed the student to identify his strengths and weaknesses and also learn from his own mistakes. With the wide variety of student experience levels in the SFQC, the ability for the student to execute this as an individual, and then conduct a practical exercise, is paramount to assisting those students with limited experience in combat or the military perform to higher standard.

The O-ATL is based on the nine dimensions of adaptive performance that clearly identifies to the SFQC student what areas he needs to focus attention on to enhance adaptability. While the nine dimensions of adaptive performance tells a SFQC student what he needs to shoot for, there is nothing on techniques to help him get there. For example, it is clear that an SF Soldier should be able to 'Handle Work Stress' or 'Solve Problems Creatively.' However, the techniques to accomplish these receive too little attention in the current adaptability training. Through the incorporation of programs such as the ACEP's Mental Skill Foundation training, ACEP techniques can be incorporated into the current adaptability training to assist the student in the SFQC and later on in an SF Group.

2.   Sustained Training at Special Forces Groups

Due to the current OPTEMPO, new SF Soldiers today lack the necessary time required to develop experience and advanced SFODA prior to deploying to combat. This lack of experience as a Special Operations soldier can be quite daunting, especially when

individuals are expected to immediately perform at the same level as more seasoned SF soldiers. At the same time, enabling the soldiers to continue their education and hone their five mental skills after graduating from the SFQC is important because these skills are perishable. By placing mental skills centers at each of the Special Forces Groups, SF soldiers could continue working on mental skills to help navigate some of the inexperience found on today's detachments, much as they currently do with language now that each Group has a language facility.

Currently, The United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina has an ACEP. This center is open to all service members, to include Special Forces soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg. Much like the CEP at West Point, this center provides instruction in the mental skills techniques at the individual, team, and unit levels. Special Forces Units from detachment to battalion level have utilized this center for mission specific training and unit level team building events. Other ACEPs are found at Ft. Hood, Ft. Bliss, Ft. Gordon, Ft. Jackson, Ft. Knox, Ft. Sam Houston, Walter Reed and Ft. Lewis. Therefore, some Groups already have an ACEP available to help implement SOF-oriented enhanced performance training at their locations.

Our recommendation is for the co-location of a mental skills center at each of the operational Special Forces Groups. The mission of each center would be to establish a SOF-oriented mental skills program and assist individuals and groups to enhance their mental performance. By continuing to refine what is initially taught in the SFQC, it should be possible to reduce the likelihood that these techniques would be forgotten. Similar to shooting or military freefall skills, if the mental techniques are not used, they will degrade and eventually be lost.

We also recommend the development of a dedicated SOF CEP at Ft. Bragg, NC. That is where all refinements to infrastructure, personnel requirements, and POI changes can be tried before being disseminated to the other SF Groups. This center would allow the Special Forces Soldiers at Ft. Bragg to develop, practice, and hone their mental skills just as a range facilitates marksmanship training. Additionally, this center should provide the Soldiers with resources to practice their individual and team building mental skills.

Until these centers are ready at each Group, USASFC or USASOC should be prepared to request CEP trainers from Fort Bragg, or West Point to travel to the SF Groups to begin the implementation of the Mental Skills Foundations training at the Operational Groups.

C.   PROPOSED INTERIM RECOMMENDATION

The recommendations above require approval of POIs, time to implement, and resources. Permanent implementation of a mental skills program both at SWC and at the tactical SF Groups will take time. Given the current lack of hard data to prove the usefulness of a mental skills program for SF soldiers and the lack of dedicated resources, we recommend a pilot program to be introduced during the SFQC to all MOS's, utilizing the same technique POI as outlined in the *Comprehensive Soldier Fitness* manual from ACEP. This manual should be tailored to meet the specific mental and physical requirements of students attending the SFQC. This pilot program would generate data so that USASOC could analyze the costs and benefits of such a program and would require minimal amounts of resourcing. Some proposed metrics to use would be peer evaluations, recycle rates, and overall first time graduation rates to see if a mental skills program is beneficial.

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